

5/5/2019

“Loving and Following Jesus”

Scripture: John 21:1-19

Third Sunday in Easter

Theme: Loving and following Jesus are decisions we make and act upon!

Well, I haven't done this in a while, but I'd like to start off with something on the lighter side this morning. I came across something that seemed to fit today's message. You may have heard the saying . . .

“Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will go out and buy expensive fishing equipment, stupid looking clothes, a sports utility vehicle, travel 1000 miles to the ‘hottest’ fishing spot, and stand waist deep in cold water just so he can outsmart a fish. Average cost per fish: \$395.68” ☺ (Source: *The Good Clean Fun Archive*)

Well, I guess we all have some indulgence or another.

John records near the very end of his gospel account ([John 21:1-19](#)) . . .

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ⁵ He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered. ⁶ He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. ⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!”

As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the

same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, **“Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”** “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, **“Feed my lambs.”** ¹⁶ Again Jesus said, **“Simon son of John, do you love me?”** He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, **“Take care of my sheep.”** ¹⁷ The third time he said to him, **“Simon son of John, do you love me?”** Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, **“Feed my sheep.”**

¹⁸ **Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.** ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, **“Follow me!”**

Loving and following Jesus are decisions we make and act upon.

For those who were with us last, we saw how God in the risen Christ Jesus is with us in various times and places, although we might not realize it or recognize him at first. I thank again those who shared a witness during or after our services. And today we see another instance, the last recorded in John’s gospel account. It shows us the following.

† **The Risen Christ sometimes questions and challenges our values and loyalties.**

We are not sure what or who Jesus was referring to when after they had finished eating, he asked Peter *“Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”* He could have been asking Peter if he loved Jesus more than he loved the other disciples. He could have been asking Peter if he loved Jesus more than the other disciples did (as some translations have it). I suppose Jesus could even have been asking Peter if he loved him more than the fish or fishing. 😊

The point is that Jesus asked Peter not once, but three times, if he really loved him.

As the Rev. Annie Lockhart-Gilroy (UM Discipleship Ministries) says, “Peter is hurt that Jesus would ask three times, as if Peter were not telling the truth. Peter responds that Jesus knows everything and therefore knows that Peter loves him. Jesus does indeed know. It may have been Peter that needed to be reminded. I imagine that Peter is still feeling the guilt of denying Jesus three times at the time of his trial. Yet each denial is matched now with an opportunity to confess his love.”

Jesus knows each of us as well. He knows when and how we have denied him. And just as he did not judge, rebuke, or discard Peter because of his denials – but prayed for him and gave him the opportunity to reaffirm his faith and love for Jesus – so Jesus does the same for us.

And as Jesus did with Simon Peter, he also questions and challenges our values and loyalties. For it is in those things or relationships that we truly express our love for Jesus. What are those things and relationship which Jesus calls into question for you? How would you answer Jesus if he asked you those questions, “Do you love me more than these? . . . Do you really love me?”

† **The Risen Christ calls us to follow him by showing love and care for others.**

And let us remember the call that Jesus placed upon Peter’s heart -- to show and demonstrate his love for Jesus by taking care of those entrusted to him by Christ. Jesus responds to Peter with three similar commands: “*Feed My lambs,*” “*Tend My sheep,*” and “*Feed My sheep.*”

These words are addressed specifically to Peter, and I believe to those called to pastoral ministry, regarding those who know, hear and listen to the voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Yet, too, Jesus calls all who follow him to care for all of those that he loves. Although Jesus himself defined his main calling as the shepherd of God’s lost people of Israel, we know that he also loved and cared for everyone.

As parents, we are called to feed, care for and nurture our children; not only with food and shelter and other necessities of physical life, but of mental, emotional and spiritual life as well. Godparents and others are given or accept this responsibility as well. I am thankful for those who value their relationship with God in Jesus, and seek their best to provide that care and nurture for God’s little ones.

Likewise, I am thankful for teachers and other leaders within the church, who provide that loving nurture and care in various ways – through baptism, Sunday worship, our Christian Preschool, Sunday School classes, Camp Pecometh and others.

Who has Jesus entrusted into your care and guidance? How do you follow Jesus by doing so? Whether it’s reading bible stories, times of prayer, a warm and encouraging embrace, giving good advice and guidance, offering support and encouragement, or simply a good example to follow, you can feed and care for Christ’s lambs and sheep.

May you, yours and others you care for, ever be blessed in hearing, loving and following Jesus!

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Questions for Reflection:

What values and loyalties has Jesus questioned or challenged? How has Jesus given you opportunity to affirm or reaffirm your love and loyalty to Him?

Who has Jesus entrusted into your care and guidance? How do you follow Jesus by doing so?